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27. (Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 15 [any one of claims 15-23], wherein said mapping means comprises, for each one of said second port and said and third port:

a set of channel specific FIFO buffers (780), each FIFO buffer corresponding to a respective channel and each FIFO buffer temporarily storing data associated therewith;

FIFO buffer selection means (770) for selecting which FIFO buffer to store said data in based upon said channel identifier; and

a slot-to-channel mapping table (790) for mapping data from said set of FIFO buffers into the respective bitstream.

28. (Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 15 [any one of claims 15-26], wherein channel management is provided by dynamic allocation and deallocation of time slots to/from in accordance with changing user capacity requirements.

29. (Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 15 [any one of claims 15-27], wherein said channel is defined by two or more time slot positions within each frame of at least one or said bitstreams.

REMARKS

Claims 1-29 are pending. Claims 4, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 18, 21, 22, 23, 27, 28, and 29 have been amended to remove multiple dependencies. Thus, no charge for multiple dependent claims should be made in calculating the filing fee. Entry of this Preliminary Amendment is respectfully requested.

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EL030412915US

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